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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/782,131	02/19/2004	Rafail Zubok	532/3X2 CIP	5239
530	7590	07/24/2008	EXAMINER	
LERNER, DAVID, LITTENBERG, KRUMHOLZ & MENTLIK 600 SOUTH AVENUE WEST WESTFIELD, NJ 07090			COMSTOCK, DAVID C	
ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER			
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07/24/2008	PAPER			

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

Office Action Summary	Application No. 10/782,131	Applicant(s) ZUBOK ET AL.
	Examiner DAVID COMSTOCK	Art Unit 3733

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --
Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133).

Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

1) Responsive to communication(s) filed on 14 April 2008.
 2a) This action is FINAL. 2b) This action is non-final.
 3) Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

4) Claim(s) 1,3 and 5-18 is/are pending in the application.
 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
 5) Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
 6) Claim(s) 1,3 and 5-18 is/are rejected.
 7) Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
 8) Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

9) The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
 10) The drawing(s) filed on 14 April 2008 is/are: a) accepted or b) objected to by the Examiner.
 Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
 Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
 11) The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

12) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
 a) All b) Some * c) None of:
 1. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

1) Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
 2) Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
 3) Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/1450B)
 Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____

4) Interview Summary (PTO-413)
 Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____
 5) Notice of Informal Patent Application
 6) Other: _____

DETAILED ACTION

Drawings

The drawings filed on 14 April 2008 are accepted.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negatived by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claims 1, 3 and 5-18 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Gill et al. (6,113,637) in view of Michelson (6,139,550).

Gill et al. disclose an artificial disc replacement (ADR) device having a flange 34 and a retaining device 39 for retaining a pair of bone screws 37 in the device (see, e.g., Figs. 1-3 and col. 5, lines 32-39). The retaining device comprises a threaded attachment member. A head flange extends from the threaded attachment member and is abuttingly received against a side of the ADR flange. An outermost portion of the head flange is partially received over a portion of a pair of bone screws or prevent backout. Gill et al. disclose the claimed invention except for the concave shape and flexibility of the head. Michelson also discloses a device comprising retaining screws, e.g. 25, for bone screws (see, e.g., Figs. 12, 14 and 16 and col. 14, line 47 - col. 15, line 2). The retaining device comprises a convex, flexible head 23 to assist the locking

device in riding over the top of a bone screw head to facilitate a surgical procedure. It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to have provided the device of Gill et al. with a convex, flexible head on the retaining device, in view of Michelson, in order to assist the locking device in riding over the top of the bone screw head and facilitate the surgical procedure. It is noted that upon flexing, the convexity of the head would decrease such that the head would become flatter. The method of claim 8 is inherent in the device of the combination of Gill et al. and Michelson. Regarding method claims 14-18, the limitations therein have not been given patentable weight since they do not affect the actual steps of the method in a manipulative sense. Moreover, it would have been further obvious to have provided any desired number or configuration of stress reliefs (i.e. slots) in Michelson, since it has been held that mere duplication of the essential working parts of a device involves only routine skill in the art. *St. Regis Paper Co. v. Bemis Co.*, 193 USPQ 8.

Response to Arguments

Applicant's arguments filed 14 April 2008 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive.

The claims were not amended to recite that the stress relief areas are completely contained within or bounded by a solid portion of the head flange, as agreed in the interview. However, upon further consideration of the application in its entirety, it appears that unless the relief portions are positively bounded on all lateral sides, the rejection will not be overcome. Applicant could also claim the shape of the relief

portions, e.g. circular. It is again noted that the head flange of Michelson is defined by an outer perimeter. The perimeter, per se, is constant, and the flange has a shape that is defined by that perimeter. Furthermore, the stress relief areas are within the confines of the perimeter. It is also noted that unless the portions of Michelson break off of the device, they necessarily act as a whole, since they are connected together. Regarding the method claims, the structural limitations therein, including those added by amendment, have not been given weight insofar as they do not affect the steps of the method in a manipulative sense.

Conclusion

Applicant's amendment necessitated the new ground(s) of rejection presented in this Office action. Accordingly, **THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL**. See MPEP § 706.07(a). Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the date of this final action.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to David Comstock whose telephone number is (571) 272-4710. Please leave a detailed voice message if examiner is unavailable. If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Eduardo Robert can be reached at (571) 272-4719. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

/David Comstock/
Examiner, Art Unit 3733

/Eduardo C. Robert/
Supervisory Patent Examiner, Art Unit 3733